

VZCZCXRO6154  
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHBK #6616/01 3051101  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 011101Z NOV 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2676  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3162  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 6244  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2293  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006616

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PACOM FOR FPA HUSO  
NSC FOR MORROW

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: THAILAND UPDATE NOVEMBER 1

REF: BANGKOK 6540

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS  
-----

11. (C) Former Prime Minister Thaksin's wife called on Privy Councillor Prem Tinsulanonda on October 26. The brief meeting has engendered a storm of protest. Critics complained that the meeting undermined confidence in the interim government, raising fears that leading figures might be looking for a way to compromise with the former PM, rather than prosecute him and root out his pernicious influence from Thai politics. Second-hand reports of the meeting indicate that Pojaman consulted Prem about facilitating her husband's return to Thailand, and Prem answered that she would have to talk to the government, as he had no authority in the issue. The general feeling here is that Pojaman came out ahead on this round, creating a sympathetic impression as a dutiful wife and contributing to general unease about the government's lack of fervour in going after Thaksin and his assets.

12. (C) In the current atmosphere of distrust, even sporting events have political undertones. The Defense Ministry's friendly soccer match with the Senior Football Players' Association turned into a political football when Council for National Security chair Gen. Sonthi was pictured side-by-side with a smiling Somsak Thepsuban, former Labor minister and head of the largest faction formerly in Thai Rak Thai. CNS Secretary-General Winai has also been criticized for an

SIPDIS  
alleged meeting with former TRT leaders, giving rise to speculation that he might be seeking a political party to be a vehicle for a political career after the return to elected government (reftel). Gen. Winai publicly denied this week that any of the CNS members had political aspirations, as did Gen. Sonthi.

13. (C) Comment: Many of the coup supporters in Bangkok are deeply disappointed that the government/CNS have not yet "gotten" Thaksin on one of the many charges of corruption

under investigation. While the investigators point to the complexity of the cases, critics fret that Thaksin's enormous wealth may be at work, undermining the investigations and seducing the current leadership into cutting some kind of deal with the former PM. Fears that the coup leaders might try to stay in power do not appear to be widespread, but the example of the 1991-91 crisis is in the back of many minds. Then, coup leader General Suchinda went back on his promise that he would not return as Prime Minister, and thereby provoked the demonstrations that ended in bloodshed. We do not see evidence that the current CNS plans to repeat that mistake, but concerns about this are likely to persist throughout the transition period. End comment.

#### PROMOTIONS, DEMOTIONS

14. (SBU) The government named Pranai Suwannarat to be the chairman of the reconstituted Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC). Pranai is the brother of Privy Councillor Palakorn, who formerly served as head of the SBPAC. Thaksin's 2001 decision to disband the civilian-led agency is generally viewed as a contributing factor to the rise in the violence in the region. The government hopes that reestablishing the Center will help to quell the violence, in part by improving coordination between the many government/security elements working in the South. However, everyone recognizes that it may take a very long time for any policy changes to have an effect in the troubled region.

15. (C) The Interior Ministry announced a reshuffle of high-ranking officials, which saw the reassignment of 11 governors to less-sensitive positions. According to press reports, these eleven were believed to have links to Thaksin. Governors in TRT strongholds Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Khon

BANGKOK 00006616 002 OF 002

Kaen were among those transferred. These transfers may help assuage the government/CNS fears of pro-TRT 'undercurrents' in the countryside, the main justification for maintaining martial law.

#### WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

16. (SBU) According to a Chinese journalist contact, Thaksin is expected to land in the PRC today, traveling on business.

BOYCE